When the Planning Inspector threw out the previous application for development at this site, he did so because the required ‘Appropriate Assessment’ had not been done. This was to ensure that there would be no significant adverse effect on the conservation objectives of the Bath and BoA bats SAC. The Inspector made it clear that case law provided that the interpretation of ‘significant’ should be set at a low threshold and that the effect should take account not only of the site itself but of the site in combination with other plans and projects in the area – the cumulative effect.

If there is any doubt as to the impact of a development on the integrity of an SAC case law is very clear - ***‘Where doubt exists as to the absence of adverse effect on the integrity of the site … the competent authority will have to refuse authorisation.’*** It goes on to say that it must be **‘*certain that it will not adversely affect the integrity of the site. That is the case where no reasonable scientific doubt remains as to the absence of such effects …’***

Council Officers have now produced their AA. It notes that **on the site itself**:-

* existing commuting routes could suffer long-term deterioration;.
* Street lights will make the main road a more significant barrier to light sensitive bats – north-south and east-west commuting routes would be damaged by habitat loss, fragmentation and light spill; some mitigation measures would take at least 10 years to become effective;
* There will be permanent deterioration of commuting and foraging features;

**On the cumulative effects** the required scientific analysis is missing. Indeed, there is no analysis of any kind of any nearby site – and no mention at all of known developments south of Corsham which have proven links to the SAC. And no data at all on district wide patterns of commuting and foraging through and between the various planned, approved and existing development sites and the SAC. Nonetheless, the AA concludes – flying in the face of its own contents - that there will be no impact on the integrity of the SAC.

The conservation objectives of the SAC require maintaining the extent of the SAC and - **importantly** - the habitats of qualifying species.

It’s clear from the AA that far from maintaining those habitats – and notwithstanding mitigation - the proposed development will damage a number of established bat commuting routes linking the site to roosts, foraging areas and a swarming site; will lead to permanent loss of habitat; will permanently fragment other habitat features.

So there is huge doubt about its impact on the SAC.

As Members you will be today adjudicating on the future of an internationally important ecological site. A site to be cherished by future generations. I ask you not to sacrifice it by permitting this development and to refuse this application.